6 Mail Facility

AQIM Handbook

Contents

Background

During the past decade, the arrival of air and surface foreign mail has increased significantly. The various agricultural items that foreign mail can potentially carry is staggering. These agricultural items can pose significant exotic pest and disease risks to U.S. agriculture. Therefore, PPQ is using AQIM to randomly sample foreign mail enabling it to determine the potential threat of foreign mail. For monitoring purposes, this pathway does not include packages moving via express carrier services such as DHL and Federal Express.

Each work location that services a mail facility will randomly sample air and surface foreign mail arriving at that location. The data collected from the random sampling will help to answer the following questions:

1. What is the threat of agricultural pests approaching the work location via this pathway?
2. How effective is the AQI program at managing this threat?

In order to determine risk levels, the origin and destination of foreign mail is important, as well as, whether agriculture items in foreign mail carry any pest or disease.

While each mail facility has a differing amount of foreign mail, the same criteria for sampling foreign mail applies to all mail facilities. By consistently taking random samples of foreign mail, PPQ will be able to depict any emerging pest threat by this pathway. The combined data from all work locations that service mail facilities will help PPQ determine the pest risk of agricultural items carried in the universe of foreign mail.

Monitoring foreign mail is an ongoing PPQ function and is an integral part of the AQI program. The ongoing sampling of foreign mail will allow work locations to adjust their selection criteria for the present and the future. Also, monitoring helps PPQ measure how well its workforce is accomplishing the mission to exclude exotic pests and diseases.

Pathway Monitoring Maintenance

Port managers and local AQIM coordinators are responsible for ensuring that monitoring activities are being performed and being performed properly. To help with reviewing the status of monitoring activities, refer to **Appendix L**—Pathway Monitoring Maintenance.

This appendix contains a checklist of questions port managers and local AQIM coordinators should periodically answer to ensure proper monitoring of each designated pathway at their work locations. See **Figure E-1**. The questions review the following topics:

- Random sampling
- Proportional sampling
- Adequate sampling
- Accurate and complete data
- Working risk committees
- Local support

Mail Facility Worksheet

On the next page, there are three record forms you can use to record the information gathered for AQIM purposes from inspecting foreign mail. Feel free to remove, photocopy, and reuse the following page. The worksheet is also available on disk; contact your local AQIM coordinator. The form is also available as a fillable form; go to:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/manuals/port/pdf_files/AQIM_in_PDF/Mail_Facility.pdf

Agriculture Quarantine Activity Systems (AQAS) User Guide for Data Entry

The data collected must be entered into the AQAS database. This is a web-based program and is accessible from any USDA APHIS or DHS CBP computer. The web address is:

https://mokcs14.aphis.usda.gov/aqas/login.jsp

A user name and password is required to enter and access the data. These can be obtained by contacting your immediate supervisor.

Survey Results and How To Use Them

AQIM activities have been put into place to develop baseline data to help answer two basic questions:

1. What is the threat of agricultural pests approaching work locations?
2. How effective is the AQI program at managing this threat?

Preliminary results for foreign mail surveys provide a general answer for Question 1. That is, there are varying rates at which prohibited agricultural materials approach work locations. These prohibited agricultural materials are what could have agricultural pests. Surveys show that at some work locations about 2 percent of the foreign mail had prohibited items. At other work locations, surveys show that the rate of prohibited items in foreign mail occurred near 6 percent.

These percentages are a rough approximation of agricultural pest threat. Further analysis of the monitoring data is needed to determine the risk associated with the prohibited items approaching the work location. The origin and destination of the prohibited items are important to determine risk levels. Also, whether or not the prohibited item carries an actual agricultural pest is analyzing risk.

Analyses of the monitoring data need to occur at several levels of PPQ. At the work locations, PPQ personnel need to study what the data means and answer the first question for their specific location. Analysis tools are available to help with these analyses, which are explained in the next subsection. At the same time, PPQ holds risk analysis workshops around the country to introduce risk analysis concepts. At some work locations, teams of PPQ officers and managers form Risk Management Teams to look at monitoring data and other data, which are normally collected at the location.

At other locations, analyses of monitoring data occur to establish rates at which quarantine items and agricultural pests are approaching the borders of States, areas of the country, and the United States.

Once baseline rates are well established, PPQ can use the monitoring data as a baseline to answer the second basic question: How effective is the AQI program at managing the risk of introduction of agricultural pests and diseases? Again, each work location must conduct this type of analysis. AQIM provides a framework which work locations can use to carry out the analysis.

Questions to Guide Data Analysis

1. How many foreign mail packages were selected for sampling during the survey period?

   How many mail packages sampled required an action (seizure or other action required as a condition of entry) during the survey period?

   What is the action approach rate of mail packages requiring action (number of mail packages, with one or more items categorized as seized or clean/treatment, divided by the total number of mail packages sampled)?

   How many seizures (QMIs) came from the samples?

   What is the QMI approach rate of mail packages with prohibited agricultural material (total number of QMIs divided by total mail packages sampled during the survey period)?

2. How many pest interceptions (actionable pests) were made from survey samples?

   Pest Approach Rate: What is the rate of pest interceptions in relation to number of mail packages (number of actionable pests divided by number of mail packages in the sample)?

3. How many QMIs were plant material? Meat or animal products?

   What is the rate of QMIs for plant material and meat/animal products?

   DISCUSSION:

   Is there a greater risk from plant material or animal products at the work location?

4. Generate a list of all the origins of mail packages transiting the work location. Produce a list of origins of mail packages **with QMIs** transiting the work location?

5. Generate a list of the destinations of mail packages transiting the work location. What are the top five destinations of mail packages? What are the top five destinations of mail packages **with QMIs**?

   DISCUSSION:

   Which States are considered high risk States?

6. What is the action approach rate for each month of the survey period?

   DISCUSSION:

   Do these monthly rates correlate with traditional peak and off-peak mailing periods?

   Are there easily identified trends when the rate of QMIs transiting the work location are higher?

   Are there seasonal trends or do higher rates correlate with national or religious holidays, beginning or end of the school year, vacation periods, etc.?

7. Generate a listing and frequency of items seized. What are the top five most frequently seized items? Which QMI items present the greater risk?

8. Apply the survey results to the total mail package population to **estimate** the number of QMIs and interceptions likely to transit the work location during the survey period.

   How many (total) mail packages arrived at the mail facility during the survey period? Using WADS data and using the QMI approach rate and rate of pest interceptions on QMIs, calculate estimates of the number of QMIs and actionable pests transiting the work location.

   DISCUSSION:

   How does the estimated number of QMIs compare with the reported number of QMIs on WADS?

   What percentage of all QMIs transiting the work location were seized as a result of the AQI program?

   How does the estimated number of actionable pest interceptions compare with the reported number of actionable pests on WADS?

   What percentage of all actionable pests transiting the work location were intercepted as a result of the AQI program?